

APPENDIX F.

FINAL EVALUATION SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Located in southeast Michigan as part of the greater Detroit metropolitan area, Washtenaw County is the most populous of the demonstration project sites. The courts involved in the demonstration project are the 22nd Circuit Court (five judges); the 14-A (three judges serving Washtenaw County), 14-B (one judge serving Ypsilanti Township) and 15th (three judges serving City of Ann Arbor) District Courts; and the Washtenaw County Probate Court (two judges).⁴⁷

Table F-1 below summarizes findings for Washtenaw County under core evaluation criteria. Table F-2 summarizes results from focus group meetings facilitated by NCSC evaluators in May 1998. Table F-3 summarizes findings under special evaluation criteria.

⁴⁷ For more details, see David Steelman, Karen Gottlieb, and Dawn Rubio, *Michigan Trial Court Consolidation, Volume Six: Final Evaluation of Washtenaw County Demonstration Project* (Denver, CO: National Center for State Courts, Court Services Division, 1998).

**TABLE F-1.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY
UNDER CORE EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Core Criterion	Summary of Final Evaluation Findings
1. How does consolidation affect the use of judicial and quasi judicial resources?	The court was originally organized with civil, criminal, family, and appellate divisions, but the criminal division judges had difficulty hearing both felonies and misdemeanors. Personality conflicts meant that the civil division judges refused to help the criminal division judges. In early 1997, the court reorganized to have criminal/civil, family, and district divisions. District division judges were to take felony pleas and hear misdemeanors and limited-jurisdiction civil matters, aiding the other divisions on an as-needed basis. Cross-assignment of judges under the earlier "21 st Century" project had reduced the use of visiting out-of-county judges, so that there was little room for improvement under the demonstration project. Conflicts among the judges have hampered the effectiveness of the chief judge. Most authority for the overall consolidated court is in the Judicial Council, with the chief judge responsible for personnel matters. As for quasi judicial officers, the court conducted an experiment with having FOC referees participate in the rotation with juvenile referees for weekend initial appearances. Given the limited experience of FOC referees with juvenile matters and the geographical distance between the FOC and juvenile facilities, however, the experiment was discontinued. Magistrates in the district division cover for one another on weekends and holidays.
2. What is the effect of having a family division as part of each demonstration project?	The family division has three judges under the 1997 organization of divisions. Currently, the family division administrator also serves as the FOC. By the first quarter of 1997, the division completed the design of an experimental divorce mediation program. The major benefit seen for the program by the judges of the division is to help create an environment in which families can make decisions that they will not subsequently have to ask the court to revise. While lawyers will not necessarily play a major role in mediation sessions, they will continue to be involved in helping parties work out the terms of written agreements settling divorce cases. With the county juvenile center located several miles away from the county courthouse, two family division judges have chambers in the county courthouse and the third has chambers at the juvenile center. A second courtroom at the juvenile center, completed in 1997 and intended to improve juvenile case management, has not been used because of a shortage of judicial resources and the perceived resistance of the juvenile judge to relinquish her caseload. Integration of computers has served to improve communications among division judges and staff working on juvenile, estates, and domestic relations cases.
3. How does consolidation affect the cost-effective-ness of court operations (e.g., by reducing administrative and service duplications)?	The total number of pending "circuit" cases and the number over two years old (especially noncapital criminal cases) was notably higher at the end of 1997 than at the end of 1995. The court had fewer pending estate cases at the end of 1997 than at the end of 1995. While there were fewer delinquency petitions in 1997 than in 1995, there were more than twice as many child protection petitions, so that there were more minors under the court's jurisdiction at the end of 1997. Each of the three "district courts" had more cases pending at the end of 1997 than they did at the end of 1995. By the end of 1997, the problems that led to the 1997 reorganization were thus still affecting the size and age of the court's pending inventory. The 1997 reorganization included a restructuring of court administrators, reducing costs for administrator positions; rationalizing administration of the family division; providing an administrator for each district division entity; and providing an administrator to work with each funding unit. Finally, under the demonstration project the Trial Court increased the number of preliminary examination dockets from four per week to six per week. This has had the initial impact of increasing prisoner transport costs for the sheriff, but it is expected overall to yield more early case dispositions. This should help offset prisoner transport costs and possibly reduce jail crowding.

TABLE F-1 (continued)
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY
UNDER CORE EVALUATION CRITERIA

Core Criterion	Summary of Final Evaluation Findings
4. How does consolidation affect key stakeholders' perceptions of court operations?	Although most of the stakeholders agreed that the theory being consolidation is sound, there were conflicting opinions as to the success of the effort. While there were differences of opinion whether the court was in fact consolidated, the majority of stakeholders agreed that the situation in spring 1998 was much improved over that at the inception of the project in 1996. Those critical of the project cite insufficient preparation time; inadequate training and lack of communication from court leaders as the most significant problems associated with the change process. (See Table F-2 for highlights of positive and negative perceptions by members of each focus group.)
5. Does consolidation promote improved coordination with court-related agencies?	While record keeping functions remain outside the direct supervision of the court, the chief judge of the 22 nd Circuit Court signed a cooperative agreement with the court clerk/register in 1995, in contemplation of the Washtenaw County demonstration project application. The agreement provides for information and problem-solving consultation between the clerk/register and the court administrator's office, with procedures for resolution of disputes. Creation of centralized preliminary examinations under the 21 st Century pilot project changed prisoner transport responsibilities for the sheriff's department. It reduced the number of court locations to which prisoners had to be transported, and simplification of scheduling (four mornings each week) reduced scheduling conflicts for deputies. The demonstration court's shift to increase preliminary hearings by adding afternoon sessions has meant more court appearances for prisoner transport and more potential conflicts with afternoon felony trial appearances at the county courthouse, although more early case dispositions may ameliorate the potential for such conflicts. The creation of the criminal division with seven judges, in association with facilities limitations at the county courthouse, has also increased court security problems for the court and the sheriff's department. The high level of communications with the court system has permitted collaboration on the development of a grant application for the merger of the automated databases of the sheriff, the court system, and the prosecutor. Centralization of preliminary examinations at the county service center provided great savings for the prosecutor's office by reducing the number of court locations and dockets at which assistant prosecutors had to appear to four mornings each week. The increase from four to six preliminary examination dockets under the demonstration project increased the number of court dockets that the prosecutor's office had to cover, but in the end it moved cases more quickly through the system. With seven criminal judges under the demonstration project in 1996 instead of the five pre-consolidation circuit judges, the public defender office was challenged to have enough attorneys to cover court appearances. The difficulties this presented had a positive side effect, however, in that they forced the prosecutor's office and public defender's office to engage in greater coordination with each other. Problems in this regard may be reduced as a result of the 1997 restructuring of the Trial Court with four civil/criminal judges at the general-jurisdiction level. Initial implementation of the demonstration project caused a number of transitional problems for DOC agents serving as probation officers in Washtenaw County felony cases. A shortage of courtrooms in the county courthouse created great problems in the scheduling of criminal cases. Despite these initial problems, relations between the local DOC agents and the Trial Court have been positive. DOC agents feel that the judges have been very good to them. The chief judge of the Trial Court and the criminal division administrator have been very responsive to their concerns. In particular, the court and the county have assisted the local DOC office with automation hardware and information system access.

**TABLE F-1 (continued).
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY
UNDER CORE EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Core Criterion	Summary of Final Evaluation Findings
<p>6. What effect do “obstacles to change” and “change enhancers” have on consolidation?</p>	<p>Difficulty with judge personalities was one of the “obstacles to change.” Some of the judges in the county were not prepared for the changes associated with the demonstration project. Moreover, differences of opinion among strong-willed judges did not always lend themselves to easy reconciliation. Another problem involved the manner in which a judge was nominated in Washtenaw County for appointment by the Supreme Court to lead the demonstration project, which created divisions among the judges. Furthermore, the operation of the demonstration project in 1996 was severely hampered by court facilities. Having fewer courtrooms in the county courthouse than judges to hold hearings there has created both scheduling and security problems. An additional facility issue involves the juvenile center, which is several miles away from the county courthouse and had only one courtroom until a second was created in 1997. Plans are being developed for the construction of a new family court building, which may be built either near the current site of the juvenile center or at the county service center. Still another problem involved support staff reaction to change. While the judges in Washtenaw County reached agreement on steps to implement the demonstration project, the project went forward with several false starts and with inadequate attention to the problems that would confront court staff members. Dissatisfaction among court support personnel serving as staff in the courtrooms was consequently high in the initial months of project implementation, and staff buy-in to the idea of a consolidated court and the operation of the demonstration project has been slow to develop. The level of bar involvement in planning for change was also an issue. While the bar as a whole remained supportive of the consolidation experiment, the court’s differences of opinion with sectors of the bar hampered implementation and made the bar less enthusiastic about expressing public support for the project. Finally, statutory limitations on the duties of quasi judicial officers have limited experimentation in Washtenaw County with broader and more flexible use for them.</p> <p>To offset the possible problems presented by such obstacles as those above, the demonstration project has several positive features that will tend to promote the chance of its success. Those included the capable and hard-working judges and court support staff. By and large, the trial court bench in Washtenaw County is relatively young, open to improvements, and not wedded to needlessly retaining traditional approaches to doing business. At the same time, the staff members of the district courts, the probate court, the circuit court, and the court services division of the county clerk/register’s office have a sense of commitment to the value of their work and to serving the members of the public. The court’s successes in its 21st Century project helped create a sense of accomplishment among judges and staff. Support of local government officials was also important. While events associated with demonstration project implementation in the last half of 1996 were discouraging for local government officials, the decisions made by court leaders in early 1997 to restructure the Trial Court have reduced the tension within the court and lessened the level of concern among general government officials. Finally, court leaders in Washtenaw County have engaged the services of an expert facilitator, which helped court leaders and other stakeholders in the local court process to identify and deal with issues arising in the dynamics of organizational change.</p>

TABLE F-1 (continued).
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY
UNDER CORE EVALUATION CRITERIA

Core Criterion	Summary of Final Evaluation Findings
7. Does consolidation result in improved use of court information systems or other technology, and is that linked to enhanced court efficiency?	<p>An objective of the demonstration project has been to continue the expansion and integration of court computer information systems to include all of the trial courts, and to move toward integration with court-related agencies as well. In the period from March through October 1996, there were substantial accomplishments made with court computer technology under the demonstration project: (1) integration of the juvenile system with that for the rest of the courts; (2) probate court system implementation and training; (3) automation and training for the 15th District Court; and (4) new server, network, and PCs for the courts were set up by county data processing. As of May 1998, the 14B District Court was in the process of being added to the integrated computer network which would allow its staff to have inquiry access to all court cases except juvenile matters. With the 15th District Court going on the county's system for the courts, the public defender's office gained access to the case information from that court as well as 14A District Court cases. The Trial Court and Washtenaw County officials have also seen a benefit in supporting the automation needs of DOC probation agents. Washtenaw County has offered to supplement the equipment provided by the state so that every probation agent has a computer. The 22nd Circuit Court employed videotape to make the trial record in three of its courtrooms before the commencement of the demonstration project. In 1997, videotape was installed in two further courtrooms in the Washtenaw County courthouse, upon the retirement of two court reporters. This has added to the flexibility that the Trial Court has in having the record made of its proceedings, and the amortized cost of the videotape equipment should reduce the long-term costs of court reporting services in the county.</p>
8. What effect does consolidation have on court budgeting?	<p>The courts in Washtenaw County have budgets appropriated by three different funding units, with different fiscal years. With courts and funding units on different fiscal years, the funding units cannot accommodate a completely joint budget. As an exercise, however, the leaders of the Trial Court prepared a joint budget in early 1997; moreover, they established a joint position between 22nd Circuit Court and the 15th District Court. The current county-level budget in Washtenaw County has separate departmental budgets for the 22nd Circuit Court; the 14A District Court; the FOC; the estate division of the 81st Probate Court; the juvenile division of the 81st Probate Court; county support of probation services provided by the state through DOC; and the Juvenile Detention Center operated by the juvenile division of Probate Court. Budget integration was not achieved during the demonstration project because of inherent difficulties in (1) coordinating differences in fiscal years, (2) differences in fiscal philosophy, and (3) the preference of the funding units to deal with district court administrators rather than Trial Court administrators.</p>

TABLE F-2. PERSPECTIVES OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS ABOUT COURT OPERATIONS AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN WASHTENAW COUNTY *

Question Asked	Highlights of Positive Perceptions	Highlights of Negative Perceptions
<p align="center">Internal Stakeholders (11 focus group members)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One judge to handle one family • One trial court split into three divisions with all judges trial court judges makes a lot of sense. In the past Michigan had too many levels of courts • One stop shopping, not one location • Good to have everything under one system. There is a big difference now • Consolidation of all entities for cooperation and one common goal • Cooperation and judges helping each other is evident • At first fearful but now realize benefit to court's clients • Increased understanding of roles and duties of other court staff, increased respect for each other. Increased camaraderie • Now able to retrieve information from computer from other districts • Judges are now more decisive, efficient, and effective. Judges are doing other cases • Computer system allows staff to look up tickets for people • At first beneficial when judges traveled to outer locations • Expedited case flow • Early on in the project, relief for Judge Francis was good • More effective for family cases now that specific judges assigned • Other judges who come in have new respect for FOC because they realize how FOC helps them do their job. Also judges see how long it takes to process cases through FOC • Improved service to citizens • Cases go through process faster • Court staff can tell litigants which judge/courtroom they are assigned • People are clearer as to who the judge is for their case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had hoped computers would enable family court staff to have improved access to better serve clients • Demonstration project did not affect juvenile court, just a name change • There is no way they are going to do it. Thought it would never work • A lot of turnover in juvenile court • Too much politics and depends upon how well judges cooperate with one another • When district judge went up to circuit and trial fell through, time was lost when staff had to travel too • People treated poorly and very confusing • Court staff not involved in planning • Court staff are busy all the time because always in the courtroom • Clerks not allowed to do transcripts in court anymore • Computer limitations on information regarding family and juvenile court cases • No coordination between FOC and juvenile court. One judge/one family would help communication • In June 1996, there was a meeting with all groups in which it was said that there would be increased communication but there was never another meeting • Newsletter would aid in increased communication as well as a phone directory of court personnel • Too much change in Trial Court leadership • Communication is important because people are resistant to change and if they know what is going on they are less resistant • Court staff statements such as "that is not in my job description" • Goals of demonstration project were never clearly defined to staff • Taking six or seven weeks to turnaround a short transcript • Morale is at its lowest point than it has ever been • Court staff steering committee (convened in 9/96 and dissolved in 4/98) did not have any input on decisions • Very chaotic in the beginning of project for 14A led to lowest morale point in process • Changes were made without advising court staff • Huge parking problem at main courthouse

* Source: May 1998 focus group meetings facilitated by NCSC evaluators.

TABLE F-2. PERSPECTIVES OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS ABOUT COURT OPERATIONS AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN WASHTENAW COUNTY *

<p>Internal Stakeholders (11 focus group members) (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New judges are a breath of fresh air. Gone now are the negative ones. With new staff and judges consolidation could work • Magistrates cover for each other • Moving in the right direction now. During the last year, things are improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court administrators and judges must relay changes to line staff • There must be a continuation of computer integration and training on the computer • Staff must be involved more because they are affected. They should have input • Staff received no support from management • Prior to implementation, more details must be worked out; like getting files and personnel to courtrooms that are moved • Initially much confusion as to whether circuit case or district case • Much room for improvement • Juvenile staff could have been drawn in more • Planning phase could have been much more effective
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* Source: May 1998 focus group meetings facilitated by NCSC evaluators.

TABLE F-2. PERSPECTIVES OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS ABOUT COURT OPERATIONS AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

<p>Institutional Participants (10 focus group members)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial judge utilized efficiently, with responsibilities defined by title • Now have two judges who specialize in family related matters. Fewer judges means that attorneys and litigants know what to expect • Improvement in process and wise utilization of services have been a blessing • Kinks seem to have been worked out. It is almost back to the way it was before project • Preliminary examination process in criminal proceedings very good • Many judges willing to work as a team and share courtrooms. Consolidation provides a structure for well meaning people to work together • Benefit in that new and more judges in court • Public Defender staff levels same as 20 years ago. Preliminary exams enable them to do more • Family law judges requested bar assistance with bench book • In civil matters, improved working relationships with judges • Attorneys appear before fewer judges • Added judges in family has helped with case management and should help speed things up • When returned to four criminal judges back to pre-consolidation status • Communication is happening. Now have regular meetings with district court personnel. There use3d to be an us against them feeling • Fortunate that Chief Judge is Judge Wilder who dealt with problems calmly • People rather than structure made it work • Got to know people at 7:30 a.m. meetings • Agencies get along • Weekend arraignments worked because staff worked hard • Improved collegiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal processing suffered while civil processing improved during '96-'97 • First year extremely frustrating • Consolidation was in effect for only a very short time period • Law enforcement felt a tremendous drain in prisoner movement when there were unannounced changes in docket • Procedural problems. All problems blamed on consolidation. Initially looked like a good idea but it has not worked out well • Steps to increase efficiency and effectiveness have not really happened • Creation of family division has put stress on prosecutor's office i.e. where should juries in juvenile cases be selected and seated • Not yet a true family court. 2.6 judges are now split between domestic relations and juvenile matters • Physical separation of family and juvenile courts does not serve children well • Security is inadequate at Service Center to handle domestic relations matters • Initially mass confusion which forced you to learn the system • Part of the problem is inadequate facilities and space. Had to use visiting judges for trials. Problem with finding jury room to deliberate • Increased the number of visiting judges • Believes that no one is responding to concerns. Detectives and investigators have to travel to Service Center now • Transport officers are now gone all day • Has not improved or worsened for FIA. Meet quarterly with the juvenile court • Inadequate courtroom scheduling resulted in chaos. Also courtrooms are shabby and not secure • Prisoners in public hallways and civil judges would get secure courtrooms. Facilities limited flexibility • Courtroom 7 is a dangerous courtroom • Insufficient facilities were a big factor. Relocation of 15th District Court compounded matters • Mistakes that court made cost other departments overtime • District court cross traing causes a lot of people to be in learning curve • Consolidation has had a negative effect on FIA. Judge Francis still handles a lot of matters. We are not there yet in family court, things are not necessarily better • Court did not obtain enough input from people who work in the system
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**TABLE F-2 (continued). APRIL 1998 PERSPECTIVES OF INTERNAL
STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT COURT OPERATIONS AND
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN LAKE COUNTY (N=8)**

Question Asked	Highlights of Positive Perceptions	Highlights of Negative Perceptions
<p align="center">Institutional Participants (10 focus group members) (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation has had positive effect on Public Defender's office • Able to use court resources more efficiently • Innovative "Super Cobbs" Day • There is a huge benefit in that judges can cover for each other but case continuity suffers • Civil cases take longer so attorneys get to know the judge • Consolidation should continue. Should be wonderful when fully realized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family court lost referees due to administrative restructuring. Took forever to get to court. Justice delayed is justice denied. Still short one referee. Previous referee who retired was very skilled • County commissioners control money • Initially justice suffered when felony warrants were issued for people who were in the correct courtroom • Consolidation has not improved the pace of litigation • Too many conflicting personalities on the bench • Costs county and attorneys too much money. Still have overtime problems with sheriff's office and Ann Arbor police department. There needs to be increased judicial responsiveness to law enforcement concerns regarding overtime. In general, the court needs to be aware of the fact that court change has a financial impact on all agencies • There is a need for specialization that outweighs the benefit of judges covering for each other • Tried to do too much. Every judge had to be reassigned and not enough lead time • Court should return to pre-consolidation structure • Consolidation should be terminated or re-evaluated • Cross designation is good but dates back to 1992. What is there to continue?

TABLE F-2 (continued). PERSPECTIVES OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS ABOUT COURT OPERATIONS AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Stakeholder Category	Highlights of Positive Perceptions	Highlights of Negative Perceptions
<p align="center">Informed Citizens (9 focus group members) (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to make things more efficient and to avoid duplication • Trying to comply with the spirit of the unified court • Benefit of consolidation is that state gave \$1.2 million to upgrade computer systems • Importance of One Judge/One Family • Consolidation has improved front end access in criminal matters with preliminary exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation means lots of meetings, constant change, and lumping everyone together • Tremendous amount of tumult, shifting of judges. Loss of identity at district court level which has been co-opted to make circuit court easier • Judges come into position with expectations. Has been difficult for some judges to come under chief judge • Driven by bottom line in dollars not interests of people • Administrative mess. A process lacking integrity • Court in pilot project had unification, then dismantled it • Judicial egos in the way of a working unified court. Circuit judges do not help with district court cases • Consolidation dilutes attention on children. Importance of specialization with children in courts has been highly politicized • Courtroom at juvenile center so isolated. Juvenile judge is possessive of cases • Sounds good in theory in that equal sharing of workload by judges but has not happened • Constituents do not know whether to vote for circuit judge or family court judge • Goals of resources began to conflict leads to disaster when judges switch • Individual citizens treated poorly by the courts • Consolidation has emphasized the need for similar judicial philosophies • More judges are needed in some areas • Criminalization of children. They have no recourse to fair process. Problems with prosecutorial waivers • Space planning and facilities are an issue. Where do we put the family court? • Difficulty of rotating judges. Importance of specialization and proper training. Judges as a jack of all trades does not serve justice well • There are no uniform policies. A lot of work went into bench books which were never utilized • Administration of consolidated courts runs counter to goals • Specialization of judges is better • No easier to get hearings than pre-consolidation

TABLE F-2 (continued). PERSPECTIVES OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS ABOUT COURT OPERATIONS AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Stakeholder Category	Highlights of Positive Perceptions	Highlights of Negative Perceptions
<p>Informed Citizens (9 focus group members) (continued)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems of pro se parties not taken seriously by circuit court judges • Need to look at how court structures its family court. Caseload backlogs are well beyond legal maximums • Overall net loss to family court and district court • Problem was that extremely tight time line. Need more planning time to address issues such as facilities and union issues • No long term view of project. Did not consolidate clerk staff of district court and circuit court • Technology project was supposed to deal with issues of different courts • Consolidation effort no longer a community process. Used to be a lot of bench-bar committees. The bar used to have a seat at judicial conference.

TABLE F-3.
SUMMARY OF FINAL EVALUATION FINDINGS
UNDER SPECIAL CRITERIA FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY *

Special Criterion	Summary of Findings
6A. What are the results of a court consolidation effort with multiple funding units in a larger urban setting?	<p>In its revised 1997 management structure for the operation of the demonstration project, the court recognized the responsibility of the chief judges of the 14B and 15th District Courts to work separately with officials from their respective funding units. Yet the consolidation effort has not been hampered in its operation by the fact that there are three different funding units. Moreover, the operation of the project has resulted in greater coordination among court leaders and officials of the funding units. Most noticeable in this regard is the computer automation improvement effort under the demonstration project. The fact that the 14B and 15th District Courts are not funded at the county level will not prevent their becoming part of an integrated court information system with the county-funded court units. Washtenaw County is part of the greater Detroit metropolitan area and is one of the most populous and wealth counties in Michigan. In addition, Ann Arbor is one of the state's largest cities, and it is the home of a major university. These factors provide a more urban setting for court consolidation than is present in any of the other demonstration projects, and they have had a subtle impact on its character. Planning for improvements in court operations takes place in collaboration with a county government that has a sophisticated budgeting process and extensive capacity for development and maintenance of computer information systems. Proximity to the University of Michigan has meant, among other things, that court leaders have had access to the services of experts to aid their planning and implementation efforts. Because the courts serve a relatively large population, there are more trial judges and court staff than in any of the other demonstration projects. In a larger court operation, judges and staff members are less likely to know each other well and to interact daily with one another than their counterparts in less populous counties. In Washtenaw County, the movement toward greater coordination and cooperation through the 21st Century pilot project and this court consolidation demonstration project has had to deal with independent circuit court judges; the separate operations of estate and juvenile judges in probate court; and the separate operations of district courts. The sheer size of the bench has also probably provided more opportunities for conflicts among judges with strong personalities than would be possible in smaller communities. The size and wealth of the community and its proximity to Detroit also mean that the local bar association is larger and has more specialized practitioners than smaller communities, and this has made court coordination with the bar a more complex task.</p>
6B. What are the results of trying a consolidation effort in a single-county circuit with judges traveling to hear cases in multiple court locations?	<p>In addition to having multiple funding units, the courts of Washtenaw County have multiple court locations. The demonstration project continued the 21st Century project innovation of having all preliminary examinations in the county centralized at the county service center. In 1996, with civil and criminal division judges hearing both general- and limited-jurisdiction matters, district judges traveled regularly to the county courthouse to hear felony dockets, and circuit or probate judges traveled from time to time to hear limited-jurisdiction matters in outlying court locations. Unfortunately, this meant that the judges from the other court locations away from downtown Ann Arbor were less available in their own courthouses to hear cases and respond to issues raised by staff members. It also raised an additional issue: what court staff would work with judges when they traveled? At first, court staff were to stay in their current work locations, and only the judges would travel. Then it was decided to have a judge's court recorder travel with her or him. This caused further problems, however, because the traveling staff member might be unfamiliar with court staff and practices in a distant court location. The revisions in the structure of the demonstration project in early 1997 eliminated the combined general- and limited-jurisdiction criminal and civil divisions. While district division judges continue to travel to sit in centralized preliminary examinations and assist other judges of their own and other divisions of the Trial Court, the new 1997 structure results in less total travel for judges and dramatically less travel for court staff.</p>

* For more details, see David Steelman, Karen Gottlieb, and Dawn Rubio, *Michigan Trial Court Consolidation, Volume Six: Final Evaluation of Washtenaw County Demonstration Project* (Denver, CO: National Center for State Courts, Court Services Division, 1998), Chapter III.

TABLE F-3 (continued).
SUMMARY OF FINAL EVALUATION FINDINGS
UNDER SPECIAL CRITERIA FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY

Special Criterion	Summary of Findings
6C. What are the results of the consolidated court's continuation of its strategic planning efforts and participation as a 21 st Century Commission demonstration project?	Washtenaw County courts have a history of improvement efforts, including (a) their engagement of an outside facilitator to assist planning for change, and (b) their successful implementation of a pilot project under the Michigan Supreme Court's 21 st Century Commission. These earlier steps have helped to lay the groundwork for the implementation of the demonstration project. Yet the progress made as a result of all the pre-consolidation court improvements in Washtenaw County has limited the amount of improvement that can be attributed to the operation of the court consolidation demonstration project. In many of the other demonstration projects, the most significant changes involve the very same improvements that Washtenaw County courts had introduced <i>before</i> the design and implementation of the current project. As a result, the demonstration courts that had not taken such progressive steps earlier are in a position to show much more dramatic improvements in their court performance than may be possible in Washtenaw County.

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